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A  
DEMONSTRATION  
FROM  
CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES  
THAT THE  
Present Regulation  
OF THE  
*Ecclesiastical Revenues*  
IN THE  
Church of ENGLAND,  
IS  
Directly CONTRARY and Fatally DESTRUCTIVE  
TO THE  
Design of CHRISTIANITY.  
AND HAS A  
Necessary Tendence  
TO MAKE  
*A Corrupt and Immoral* CLERGY.

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*By a Clergyman of the same* CHURCH.

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CANTERBURY, Printed by J. Abree. MDCCLXIII.

DEMONSTRATION

CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

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Ecclesiastical

IN THE

Church of ENGLAND,

18

Directly Contrary and Totally Dissimilar

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Design of CHRISTIANITY.

AND A

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TO HAVE

A Corrupt and Immoral Clergy.

By a Christian of the Free Church.

LONDON: Printed by J. G. & Co. 1844.

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# DEMONSTRATION

FROM

*Christian Principles, &c.*

**T**HE great End of Christianity was to instruct Mankind to act most agreeably to their Duty to God, themselves, and one another. And because this, beyond every other Kind of Instructions, is more effectually delivered by Example than Precept; therefore its Blessed Author took all necessary Care, that such living Examples shou'd not be wanting in his Church. The first and most illustrious Example of this Kind, he gave in his own single Person; which, with Respect to both his Divine and Humane Nature, extended to every Degree of Men in the utmost Perfection. For if we consider the miserable Life, which this Divine Person voluntarily underwent upon Earth, for the Sake of Mankind: then, as he was God, the lowest Condescension of Goodness in the highest Mortal, that ever lived, must fall infinitely short of his; and, as he was Man, his bitter Sufferings cou'd never meet with a Parallel.

BUT because such a living Example cou'd only be confined to one Age, and to one Place; he therefore chose a distinct Society of Men



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out of the Rest of the World to succeed him in this Office, at all Times, and in all Places; wheresoever his Name shou'd be known. And to qualify them for this great Purpose, he bequeathed to them conjunctly the Legacy of his unerring Spirit, and the Protection of his Divinity, *to the End of the World*. These, as a Society, were to be a standing Pattern in every good Work, not only for particular Persons, but for every other Society to copy after. They were to be as the *Leaven* of the whole Christian Church at large; *the Salt of the Earth*; and *the Light of the World*, which was so to *shine before Men*, that they might see their good Works, and glorify their Father, *which is in Heaven*. This Society therefore, as such, was required by our Saviour to have its sole Dependence upon him and his Promises; and to have no further to do with worldly Things, than what was barely necessary to supply the Wants of Nature, in a Manner becoming such as professed themselves to be *Strangers and Pilgrims* upon Earth. If ye abide in me, says he, and my Words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Therefore take no Thought, saying, *What shall we eat? or what shall we drink, or where withall shall we be clothed?* For after all these Things do the Gentiles seek: for your Heavenly Father knoweth, that ye have Need of all these Things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all Things shall be added unto you.

AND

John xiv.  
16, 18,  
and xx.  
21, 22.

Mat.  
xxviii. 18,  
20.

Mat. xiii.  
33.  
Mat. v.  
13, 16.

1 Pet ii.

11.  
John xv. 7.

Mat. vi.  
31, 33.



AND with Regard to their Behaviour to one another, he commanded that all Pride, Insolence, and Lording it over one another, shou'd be at the utmost Distance from them; in the Room whereof they were expected to shew nothing but the meekest Condescension to one another in the meanest Offices, and the highest Instances of Kindness and Brotherly Love. *Ye know, says our Lord, that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are Great exercise Authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant. I have given you an Example, that ye shou'd do, as I have done to you. A new Commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: As I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.*

Mat. xx.

25, 27.

John xliii.

12, 15.

John xliii.

34, 35.

IN short, we find few Precepts delivered by our Saviour, which were not immediately directed to the Members of this Society, as the Persons appointed to be the Ministers and Teachers of his Gospel; and consequently who were expected in a more eminent Degree to be Examples of all they taught to the rest of Mankind: lest that shou'd happen to them which St. Paul objected against the immoral Jew, *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thy self?* For which Reason the same Apostle thought himself obliged to the severest

Phil. iii.

17. 1 Tim.

iv. 12.

Tit. ii. 7,

8. Heb.

xliii 7.

1 Pet. v.

2, 4.

Rom ii.

21.

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*Duties of Mortification and Self-denial, Left, as*  
*1 Cor. ix* himself says, *by any Means, when I have preach-*  
*27.* *ed to others, I my self should be a Cast-away.*  
 And he lays it down, as a Rule, for every one  
*2 Tim. ii.* *entangle himself with the Affairs of this Life;*  
*4.* *which cou'd only serve to byass him from his*  
*Duty, and draw his Mind from the Study of*  
*Heavenly Things.*

*It was by a strict Conformity to these Rules*  
*of their first Institution, that St. Paul, in the*  
*Behalf of himself and his Fellow-labourers in*  
*the Gospel, cou'd so boldly appeal to the*  
*2 Cor. vi.* *Consciences of their respective Flocks, to evi-*  
*3. 4.* *dence for them, That they had given no Offence*  
*in any Thing, that the Ministry should be blamed.*  
*In all Things, says he, approving, (or as it is in*  
*the Original) CONSTITUTING, ORDER-*  
*ING, or DISPOSING our selves TOGETHER,*  
*as the Ministers of God: as Persons to whom*  
 God had committed the Care and Government  
 of his Church; and as such were obliged in all  
 their Behaviour to shew the brightest Examples  
 of that Love and Forbearance, that Meekness  
 and Humility, that Sincerity and Contempt of  
 Worldly Things, that Temperance and So-  
 briety, which ought to be the distinguishing  
 Character of every Christian; but especially of  
 their high Profession, whose bad Example  
 cou'd not but reflect the greatest Scandal upon  
 their holy Religion. It is not to be supposed,  
 but unworthy Persons might sometimes insinu-  
 ate themselves into the Ministry. We have

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an Instance of this under the Eye of our Saviour himself, in the Person of *Judas Iscariot*. But then this cou'd not justly be charged upon the Ministry itself, as long as they were diligently sought after, and zealously excluded as soon as detected. The Faults of no particular Member of any Society can otherwise be justly charged upon the Office of that Society, than as it is either unequal to produce the good Ends for which it is pretendedly designed; or else is abused or perverted to contrary Purposes: The former of which must follow from a Default in the Institutor; the latter from the Perfidy, or at least the Incapacity, of the Persons entrusted with the Exercise of it, as such. But the sacred Office, we are now treating of, can be supposed liable to no Kind of Blame in the former of these Respects; since the Blessed Institutor of it was no less than the Eternal Son of God himself, the Perfection of all Wisdom and Goodness: who doubtless omitted nothing on his Part, which might be necessary to present unto himself a glorious Church, not having Spot or Eph. v. 27. Wrinkle or any such Thing; but that it shou'd be holy, and without Blemish. It follows then, that if the Christian Ministry or Priesthood be at any Time Faulty, the Blame must necessarily fall upon the Ministers themselves by forsaking the Rules of their first Institution, and setting up their own Inventions.

Now to shew when, and how far, the Pastors of the Church may be Blame-worthy in this



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this Respect, it will be requisite to give a fuller Description of the Nature and Design of their Office, and the Relation they stand in to their Head, which is Christ.

THIS select Society has been shewn to consist of such Persons only, as were authorised to be the visible Ministers of the Kingdom, which Christ came to establish upon Earth: which, like all other well regulated Societies, was made up in it self of different Orders and Degrees of Men; some being appointed to govern, and others to obey, agreeable to what St. Paul says, 1 Cor. xii. 28. And that this Government, in the same City at least, was always lodged in the Hands of one particular Person, is plain from the Instances of St. James over the Church at Jerusalem, Timothy at Ephesus, Titus in Crete, and the seven Angels over the seven Churches in Asia: all of whom had their subordinate Clergy for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ. These spiritual Governours were in After-times distinguished by the Name of Bishops; who as they were designed, over their respective Colleges of Presbyters and Deacons, to be Patterns of the most perfect Sincerity, Meekness, Disinterestedness, and Impartiality, for every Governour to copy after; so were they absolutely prohibited from having the least to do with worldly Honours and Emoluments, those usual Temptations which make Governours forget their Duty. The only worldly Advan-

Acts xii.  
17. and  
xv. 13, 19.  
1 Tim. i. 3.  
Tit. i. 5.  
Rev. i. 20.  
Eph. iv.  
11, 12.

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xvi. 2  
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xi. 34



Advantage, if it might be called such, which they received from their Superiority, was a greater Load of Care, and a more eminent Exposure to Dangers and Sufferings.

THE sole Authority, which these Governours cou'd claim to themselves, was the Liberty, (1.) Of performing the external Worship and Service of God, according to his own Appointment: (2.) Of proclaiming the Laws and Instructions of their great Master to Mankind: (3.) Of inviting and admitting Men into, and rejecting or excluding them from a Fellowship with themselves in that Worship: (4.) Of making necessary Laws and Provision for all the foregoing Purposes. And in all these Actions they were not to build their Support upon any earthly Power whatever; but were to be wholly dependent upon God alone, from whom they immediately received their Authority. As no Person was to be enticed into the Communion of the Church out of the least Hope of a temporal Reward, no more was any to be retained within the same out of the least Dread of any Punishment in the Power of Man to inflict: lest it shou'd appear to be a Work of Man and not of God. Every Kingdom in this World must have

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- (1.) *Acts* i. 2, 14. *Acts* ii. 42. *Acts* xi. 26. *Acts* xx 7.  
 (2.) *Matth.* xxviii. 18, 20. *Mark* xvi. 15. *Luke* ix. 1. and 10. 3.  
 (3.) *Matth.* xxviii. 19. *Acts* ii. 38, 41. 2 *Cor.* ii. 6, 8. *Matth.* xvi. 19. *Matth.* xviii. 18. *John* xx. 23. 1 *Cor.* v. 4 + 7. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 22. *Tit.* iii. 10.  
 (4.) *Matth.* xviii. 17. *Acts* vi. 2, 3. *Acts* xv. 6, 11. 1 *Cor.* xi. 34. 1 *Cor.* 14, 33, 40. *Gal.* vi. 16. 1 *Tim.* i. 3. *Tit.* i. 5.

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Recourse to worldly Rewards or Punishments to oblige Men to their Duty; *i. e.* to such Rewards or Punishments as can affect them in this Life. But in the Kingdom or Church of Christ all such were excluded in any Shape whatever. The Obedience which he required was to be free as the Will it self, or otherwise it was nothing worth. He wou'd own no Man as his Subject, who was such upon any other Motive than that of his own Conscience, and the Sense of what must become of him hereafter. Again, it is lawful for an earthly King to defend himself and his Subjects by Arms and Force. But so contrary was this to the Intent of the Kingdom of Christ, that he wou'd not permit his Servants to fight; tho' it was for the saving of his own Life, when it was unjustly attempted. And this he offers as an Argument to convince Pilate, that his *Kingdom was not of this World*. The Kingdom he came to establish was of a Nature so different from all earthly Kingdoms, that it was to be enlarged by Sufferings and Non-resistance. No Weapon was to be used, but Prayers and Intreaties; no Interest aimed at, but the universal Good of Mankind. No Conquest was here to be attempted, but the Conquest of Sin; no Submission required, but such as was voluntary, and the Result of Mens own free Choice, by which they obliged themselves to act so as best became their rational Character. For *tho'*, says St. Paul, *we walk in the Flesh, yet we war not after the Flesh*. If therefore the

John iv.  
 24. Acts  
 viii. 37.  
 Rom. viii.  
 27. 1 Tim.  
 i. 5.

Mat. xxvi.  
 51--54.

John xviii.  
 36.

2 Cor. x.  
 3--6.

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Governours of the Church might have had the civil Power, as such, to assist them to carry on their Work, it was absolutely unlawful for them to accept it. Such Helps might indeed have very much enlarged the Number of the outward Professors of Christianity: but then all those Professors, who were made such upon no other Grounds, had better have continued at their own Option. He, who is a Christian upon no other Motive than by being bribed to it, or out of a Fear of being exposed to suffer from Men either in his Body or Goods, is not such a Disciple as Christ seeks. He wants no such Converts, how formidable soever his Church may thereby appear for Multitudes in the Eyes of the World. For wherever such Means are used, for the Sake of making Profelytes to Christianity, they only serve to render Men Hypocrites in their Religion, and are directly contrary to that *Obedience of Faith*, which Christianity requires.

Rom. xvi.  
26. Heb.  
xi. 6.

AND this doubtless was one great Reason why our Saviour so strictly prohibited the Ministers of his Church from ever assuming to themselves the least Authority, which was purely temporal; as a Thing quite contrary to the Design of their Ministry. For which he gave them his own Example, when he would not be seen to intermeddle in the smallest Matter, which was left to an earthly Tribunal to decide; tho' himself was the absolute Lord of both Heaven and Earth. For when one did but say unto him, *Master, speak unto*

Luke xii.  
13, 14.



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*my Brother that he divide the Inheritance with me: his Answer was, Man, who made me a Judge or a Divider over you? Nay, he meekly gave himself up to be unjustly sentenced to Death by the same Authority, without offering the least Resistance; when it was in his Power to have destroyed all the Powers upon Earth with the Breath of his Mouth. Nor wou'd he admit of any such Defence to preserve the Purity of his Doctrine against the Attempts of Hereticks and Seducers. He had committed the Keys of his Church to the Apostles and their Successors, obliging them to exclude all such: And further than this they shou'd not go, but leave the rest to him; that no Flesh shou'd glory in his Presence.*

1 Cor. i.  
19.

THE Society then of the Christian Priesthood was, as such, to have its entire Dependence upon, and be accountable to Christ alone; that it might be always a standing visible Monument to the World of God Almighty's especial Care and Protection over such as faithfully rely upon him in Obedience to his Will. It was from Christ himself that the Governours of this Society derived their Authority, who declared he wou'd *always* be with them. And he, who knew all Things, knew what Difficulties and Dangers they shou'd have to contend with, both from without and from among themselves. But yet he wou'd allow them no other Weapon to defend themselves with, but their Innocence and Integrity. *Abide in me, says he, and I in you.*

John. xv. 4.

*As*



*As the Branch cannot bear Fruit in itself, except it abide in the Vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* This was to be the *Rock*, upon Mat. xvi. 18. which he determined to build his Church, and he promised that *the Gates of Hell shou'd not prevail against it.* But if at any Time they shou'd betray up, or misapply the Authority he gave them upon secular Views, or attempt to divide their Love between him and the Things of this World; he declared he wou'd admit of no Rival in their Affections, but at the same Time wou'd assuredly withdraw his Love from them, and leave them to eat of the Prov. i. 31. *Fruit of their own Way.* A remarkable Instance of which we have in the Defection of the Church in *Asia*; where our Lord thus threatens that Branch of it planted at *Ephesus*: *Thou hast forsaken thy first Love. Remember* Rev. ii. 5, *therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do thy first Works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of its Place, except thou repent.*

HENCE we may observe, what little Reason the Church militant had at any Time to presume upon her own Infallibility, upon Account of any absolute Promise She had received from Christ. The Church universal, like every individual Member of her, was always to be in a dependent State; and cou'd presume no otherwise to hope for the more extraordinary Protection and Assistance of God, than as she kept up to his Conditions. But if she had received any such absolute Promise, she

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she wou'd have had it so far in her own Power to depend upon herself, and be self-sufficient. A State which Man through his natural Pride has ever been prone to aspire after. This was the Cause of our first Parents unhappy Fall; and wherever it is pretended to, by any Church, there cannot be a surer Sign given of its deep Degeneracy. For a Witness of which, at this Day, we need only turn our Eyes upon that abhorred Spectacle, which Christianity makes, as dressed up by the Sons of Rome. A Spectacle which no pious Christian can look upon without breaking forth into the Lamentation of the Prophet: *How is the faithful City become an Harlot! it was full of Judgment, Righteousness lodged in it, but now Murderers.*

*Isai. i. 21.*

*Luke ix.  
54,--56.  
Gal. v.  
22,--24.*

To pass by the many other monstrous Abuses, which have crept into that Church; Who cou'd imagine that Men wou'd ever attempt to reconcile the Love, Forbearance, Gentleness and Humility of Christianity with a bloody Inquisition? and in the Room of the beautiful Spouse of Christ set up a frightful *Medusa*, whose very Aspect is enough to terrify and amaze the Beholders into Stones. We are not ignorant that these Persons do usually produce the Instances of *St. Peter's* Sentence upon *Ananias and Sapphira*, and *St. Paul's* upon *Elymas* the Sorcerer, to justify their barbarous Cruelty upon all whom they are pleased to condemn as Hereticks: As if this were a sufficient Warrant for them to call in the secular Power to punish such as have never

*Acts v. 1-  
-11. Acts  
xiii. 11.*

never committed the least apparent Offence against it. Whereas all, that those Apostles in the said Instances can be suppos'd to do, was from the immediate Hand of God. And if they themselves wou'd never presume to inflict such Punishments, but by such Means; we might safely rely upon it, they wou'd then be as harmless as they are now terrible. For they, who have thus renounced their Dependence upon God, have the least Reason of any Persons in the World to expect that he shou'd vindicate their Authority in so extraordinary a Manner. This is not only a flat Contradiction to the Spirit and Design of Christianity, but one of the grossest Instances of the wretched Fallibility of that Church, which yet is so blind as to boast her self to be the only infallible Church upon Earth. It appears from the whole Tenor of the Gospel that God is no less jealous of admitting a Rival to share with him in the Support of his Church, than he was of admitting other Gods with him under the Law. The whole Doctrine of our holy Religion consists in teaching us to walk according to our Dependence upon God: and in a Christian Sense every Removal of our Dependence from thence upon created Beings is a Species of *Idolatry*. For the Church herself therefore to have Recourse to humane Force or Art for compelling or retaining Men within her Bosom, is an *Idolatry* of the blackest Kind. It is a downright Apostacy from her Dependence upon Christ, and reflects the greatest Dishonour upon the Religion he came into

1 Sam. xv.

23. Eph.

v. 5.

Col. iii. 5.

2 Cor. iv. 4.



into the World to establish, by making as if that could not be kept up in the World, but by such vile Helps: So that through this Means the Church of Rome gives another Instance of her *Idolatry*, besides that of worshiping Saints and Images.

Hence again we may observe, what little Right the Bishop of Rome has to the Exercise of his two pretended Swords; or even any Ecclesiastical Person to concern himself with the Civil Authority, upon any Account whatever. The Ecclesiastical Sword, as it is called, reaches no farther than to what barely pertains to the Conditions of retaining Men within, or excluding them out of the Pale of the Church; the rest being left entirely to God. Nor is it just that any Delinquent in this Respect should be exposed to Punishment from Men, either in his Body or Goods; unless his Offence be also of such a Nature as would fall under the Cognisance of the civil Legislature, whether there were a Christian Church or not. When the Religion of a Nation is presumptuously blasphemed or affronted, and when Mens temporal Rights and Properties are invaded, or the worldly Welfare of humane Society any Way disturbed; here it belongs to the civil Magistrate to see Things rectified, who is the proper Minister of God in these Respects, and ought not to bear the Sword in vain. But if he refuse to do his Duty, the Church has no Authority to compel him by humane Force; but, when all other lawful

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Rom. xiii.

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Means are ineffectual, the Matter must be referred to God, who, if Justice be not done in this World, will not fail to do it himself in the next. Our Lord designed his Church, as such, to have its Dependence absolutely upon himself alone; but every visible Member of the Church being also a Member of some civil Society, he left it in that Respect to depend as absolutely upon the civil Power. He invested his Apostles and their Successors with all that spiritual Authority which was necessary for the Government of his Church, appointing them and them alone, as his visible Representatives upon Earth in that Respect; but in every other Respect, which related to the temporal Government of the World, they were to continue as dependent upon, and have as little to do with the civil Authority, as the meanest Subject. And the Reason of the Thing requires that it shou'd be so. The Ecclesiastical and civil Authority were of so different a Nature, that they cou'd not be lodged in the same Hands without corrupting one another; therefore under the Christian Dispensation they were always to be kept separate. For the civil Magistrate is obliged by his Office to *entangle himself* in worldly *Affairs* for the Advantage of Men in this Life; but on the quite contrary every Ecclesiastical Person is obliged *not to entangle himself* 2 Tim. ii. 4. in the same, that he may be more at Leisure to prepare them for the Life to come. And as no Man ought to *put asunder what God hath joined together*, no more ought any

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to join together what God and the Nature of  
*Mat. vi. 24.* the Thing have thus separated. *No Servant,*  
*says our Saviour, can serve two Masters, for*  
*either he will hate the one and love the other,*  
*or else he will hold to the one and despise the*  
*other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*

HERE cou'd then be no Room for Suspi-  
 cion that the first Teachers of the Gospel, in  
 any Country, had a Design to usurp the Au-  
 thority of the secular Magistrate: And as to  
 any Tie which they themselves might lie un-  
 der, as natural Subjects of the same, the ex-  
 press Command of God was enough to super-  
 sede that. And the unquestionable Miracles  
 they were impowered to perform, was a fla-  
 grant Proof of their Divine Commission, and  
 left their Opposers without the least Shadow  
 of Excuse. Accordingly we find they went  
 on in the Discharge of their Duty, without  
 asking Licence for it from any civil Magi-  
 strate whatever. And when they were strict-  
 ly prohibited by the same Authority, their  
 only Answer was in this just Expostulation,  
*Act. iv. 19.* *Whether it be right in the Sight of God, to*  
*and v. 29.* *hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.*  
 If they cou'd not have given these miraculous  
 Proofs, it had, no Doubt, been the Duty of  
 the civil Magistrate to have zealously endea-  
 voured the Suppression of such Pretenders.  
 But when on the contrary it so manifestly ap-  
 peared that the Finger of God was in all they  
 did; as *Gamaliel* rightly argued, It was their  
 Duty to submit, *lest haply they shou'd be found*  
*even*

even to fight against God. But all such Oppositions made by the civil Magistrate against those first Teachers of the Gospel were not only a presumptuous Fighting against God, but a stupid Fighting against themselves. For the Authority which was exercised by these innocent Persons was so far from interfering with the civil Authority, that it was a stronger Tie to keep Men in subjection to their temporal Governours, than any which this World cou'd afford. They taught their Hearers to be subject *not only for Wrath, but also Conscience sake*; not only out of a Fear of Punishment in this World, but in the next. And upon every Occasion they exhorted them to *render to all their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour: To defraud no Man; To be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another: And to lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty; each Man studying to do his own Business, and to work with his own Hands.* Nor in all this cou'd they stir up any Person's Jealousy, as if they had the least Aim after temporal Advantage. They endeavoured to make all Men Disciples to their Religion; but they did it in such a Manner as made it apparent to the World, that *they sought not theirs but them.* They coveted no Man's Silver or Gold, or Apparel, but laboured Night and Day with their own Hands, that instead of becoming chargeable to any one, they might minister to

Rom. xiii.

1--5.

1 Pet. ii.

13, 14.

Rom. xiii.

6, 7.

Mat. xxii.

21.

1 Thes. iv.

6.

Rom. xii.

10.

1 Tim. ii. 2.

1 Thes. iv.

11.

2 Cor. xii.

14.

Act. xx.

33.

1 Thes. ii.

9. Act. xx.

34, 35.



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*the Necessities of others.* Nay, whenever they  
 1 Cor. iv. were called to it, they meekly gave them-  
 12, 13. selves up to the cruellest Deaths in Testi-  
 mony of the Truth and Importance of what  
 they taught.

So great was the Zeal of the first Converts  
 to Christianity, that the Layety<sup>s</sup> as well as  
 Clergy kept in continual Society together, and  
 44, 45. had all Things common, and sold their Posses-  
 sions and Goods, and parted them to all Men,  
 as every Man had Need. Now tho' this was  
 not to be a standing Rule to the Layety, as  
 several of our late Anabaptists are reported to  
 have taught; yet that it was always to hold  
 with the Clergy is plain from their constant  
 Practice afterwards, as long as Christianity  
 continued in its Purity. When Bishops were  
 appointed to certain Districts, it is known that  
 each of these with his subordinate Presbyters  
 and Deacons lived all together in the same  
 College or Family. By which Means they  
 were kept continually under the Eye of their  
 Governour, and cou'd have the Advantage of  
 one anothers mutual Helps and Instructions  
 24. to provoke one another unto Love, and to all good  
 Works. And the Maintenance of these reli-  
 gious Bodjes was so ordered that no Man  
 cou'd have the least Temptation to thrust him-  
 self into their Office, for the sake of gratify-  
 ing his Indolence, Covetousness, Ambition,  
 or any other wicked Inclination. To supply  
 the mere Wants and Necessities of Nature,  
 24. and to have their Children brought up in the  
 Nur-

*Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*, was the utmost worldly Riches and Honour, which they were ever permitted to aim after. And he, who was known to have any other secular Views in entering himself into the Ministry, was for that very Reason judged highly unworthy of it, and rejected with the same Indignation and Abhorrence, with which St. Peter rejected Simon Magus; esteeming such a one to be in the very *Gall of Bitterness*, and in *the Bond of Iniquity*. Act: viii. 23.

ONE indispensable Office of every Clergyman, as has been said, was to be a living Instance of that Self-denial and Renunciation of the World, which was required from all Christians in whatever shou'd stand in Opposition to their Duty. It was therefore necessary that the Clergy, as such, shou'd be tied up by Laws made peculiarly for that Purpose. And the Apostles with their first Successors were endowed with a competent Portion of the Holy Spirit to be in such Case their Director: By whom, among other Things, it was instituted *That the Distinction of Superior and Inferior in the Ministry shou'd not have the least Dependence upon secular Advantages*: But that every Bishop and his Clergy *shou'd have their Maintenance in common*, shared indiscriminately, *as every Man had Need*. No Distinction was allowed to be made in allotting any one Man, to his own private Use, a greater Portion of this common Property than another; by Way of Pre-eminence above his Fel-

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Fellows. The lowest had an equal Right with the highest to what was needful for the Wants of Nature; and if the highest sought for more, it cou'd only serve to discover how ill he deserved the Pre-eminence he had acquired.

1 Tim. vi.  
8--11.

Sozomeni  
Hist Ec-  
cles. Lib.  
5. c. 5.

Cuncil.  
Carthag.  
Canon  
51, 52, 53,  
Anno  
Dom.  
398.

Cuncil.  
Carthag.  
Canon  
32, 33.  
Anno  
418, 419.

Cuncil.  
Arelat.  
Canon 14.  
Anno  
442.  
Cuncil.  
Arelat.  
Canon 27.  
Anno  
538.

AND even after the Empire was become Christian, when the State had provided for the Maintenance of the Clergy, yet among many other Canons of Councils for their Regulation, it was in some Places ordained that Ministers shou'd be obliged to earn their Living by some honest Trade; at the same Time not omitting the Duties of their proper Function: that the Church might be better able to supply out of the common Stock to the Necessities of the Poor and Distressed. And that Churchman was esteemed guilty of the blackest Sacrilege, who shou'd purchase an Estate out of the Revenues of the Church to his own private Use, or for the enriching of his Family. It was always a Maxim with them, that *The Revenue of the Church was the Patrimony of the Poor*. Rather therefore than the Poor shou'd want, the Clergy were obliged to work for their Bread; being at the same Time restrained from all *Traffick, Lending Money upon Interest, and every dishonest Calling*. And every such Person as entered into the Ministry with a competent Estate of his own, was either obliged to quit that Estate or totally resign his own Right to any Part of the Church's Revenue; the holding of which, in such Cases,

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Cafes, being ever looked upon as a ſacrilegious Robbery of the Poor. That this was the Diſcipline of the Primitive Church we have the Teſtimony of an *African* Father, even as late as the latter End of the fifth Century; who, when he comes to remind Eccleſiaſtics of their Duty, informs them, *That they who enter into the Number of the Clergy ought to renounce their Eſtates, ſell all and give to the Poor; contenting themſelves with the Revenues of the Church, which they ought not to poſſeſs as their own, being only properly the Managers of them: That they ought to think the Revenues of the Church to be the Vows of the Faithful, the Atonement for Sins, and the Patrimony of the Poor: So that they ought not to appropriate them to themſelves, as properly belonging to them, but to diſtribute them to the Poor, as a Truſt: That the Miniſters of the Church have no Right to them, but under the Title of Poverty; and if they are rich otherwiſe, and yet live of the Revenues of the Church, they rob the Poor: That they, who ſuppoſe theſe Revenues of the Church to be a Reward for their Service, deceive themſelves by expecting temporal Rewards for that which deſerves eternal: That they who have an Eſtate ought to be ſo far from living at the Charge of the Church, that they ought to impart their Incomes to the Church, without being in the leaſt proud of it.*

*Julianus  
Pomerius  
Maurus  
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pin's Hiſ-  
tory of  
Eccleſiaſ-  
tical  
Writers,  
Vol. 4  
Page 185.*

How can we then forbear admiring that ardent Zeal for the Glory of God, that tender Love of Souls, that generous Contempt of

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of earthly Things, and that absolute Dependence upon God, which was shewn by these first Ambassadors of Christ? O glorious State of the Church of Christ, while adorned with such shining Lights! O happy People, who were under the Conduct of such Guides to lead them into the Paths of Salvation! And, O much more happy Guides, who by thus fighting the good Fight of Faith had each *a Crown of Righteousness prepared for him, at the Day of his Dissolution!* So far was the Ministry from all Fear of suffering Discredit in such Hands, that by their worthy Exercise of it, the whole Church at large appeared like a delightful Garden in the midst of a howling Wilderness, whose sweet Fragrancy diffused itself to the Ends of the Earth. Then had the Lord *Pleasure in the Beauty of his Spouse; the Gentiles saw her Righteousness, and all Kings her Glory.* And all this these primitive Shepherds of the Flock of Christ performed by a steady Adherence in their Office to the Rules and Precepts, which their great Master had left them; who has commanded his Blessing always to attend upon his own Institutions.

*2 Tim. iv. 8.*

*Pf. xlv. 12.*

*Isai. lxii. 2.*

Now when the Clergy became too corrupt to be guided by these Rules; as is usual in such Cases, what they had no Mind to perform, they endeavoured to represent as altogether impracticable. And the most specious Argument they produce for that Purpose, at present, is by urging, That if such

a Levelling of the Revenues of the Church were made in our Days, it wou'd be the ready Way to deter all Men of Merit from ever entering among the Clergy. For what Reward, say they, wou'd this be for all the Expences of their Education? And what Encouragement shou'd we have for any Person to endeavour to excel others in Learning; when he knew that as to any temporal Advantage, this cou'd raise him no higher than the most illiterate of his Brethren? But these Arguers, how learned soever they may be in some Respects, it is evident, do by such Arguments betray the most wretched Ignorance in the Nature and Spirit of Christianity; and consequently are far from being qualified themselves for that Pre-eminence, which they so ambitiously seek after. For we have seen that all such Views ought to be the farthest removed from a Clergyman of any Person whatever. And there is not a surer Sign by which a Man may be known, in that Respect, to have no Deserts, than his aiming to be thus prefer'd above his Brethren, as the due Reward of his Deserts. This Regulation therefore can only be supposed to be a Banishment of such Encouragements to Learning, as are altogether unworthy of a Clergyman to stand in need of. It is indeed a setting all Ecclesiastics upon the same Level in a temporal Respect; but this is no more than what the Nature of their Office requires, among whom all Distinction of Order is purely spiritual.

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BUT I affirm that the ancient Apostolical Scheme for a Community of Maintenance among the Clergy is a much more rational Way for promoting Learning among them, than the present. For (not to insist upon the Advantages of Learning this wou'd give them from their continual Society with one another) who, that has the least Spark of Christianity, can forbear owning, that if the Clergy were thus strictly kept up to the primitive Pattern and Discipline, their unblameable Lives and unwearied Zeal in the Service of God wou'd have a vastly greater Influence over their People, than they have at present? The Consequence of which must be, to render their sacred Office lovely and amiable in the Sight of all Men. And if these were Motives sufficient to raise so many learned Men, as *Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origin, Cyprian*, and innumerable others, to espouse the Cause of Christ, at a Time when for a Man to profess himself a Christian was to expose not only his Estate but his Life to the Mercy of every Informer; then how much stronger must the same Motives be to continue a learned Clergy in our Age; when they are so far from being subjected to the like Calamities, that the Civil Power has provided them with a comfortable Maintenance, if it were distributed in any due Proportion? And when all Men saw such a regular Distribution of the Revenues of the Church among the Clergy; what an Encouragement wou'd this be for them to give a

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suitable Education to such of their Children, as they found that Way inclined, in Comparison to that Injustice and Rapine, which has so far prevailed, as to render that Society a Mock and a By-word, which was intended to be a Pattern for every other Society to copy after?

BUT again, I affirm, that the present Regulation of the Revenues of the Church, as managed among us, has a necessary Tendency to make a corrupt and immoral Clergy; and consequently to produce all that Infidelity and Contempt of Religion, which has so great a Share in the Wickedness of the present Age. For when the Office of an Ecclesiastic is accompanied with an Opportunity of worldly Riches, Ease, and Grandeur; this naturally puts such Persons upon seeking after it, who make those Things their only Aim, and consequently will omit no Means, however base and vile, to attain their Ends. Hence it must in Time come to pass, that the Government of the Church of Christ it self, shall be wholly guided by worldly Friendship and Interest; and they, who have the smallest Share of Christianity themselves, shall be entrusted with the principal Management of it. The Sense of the wretched Corruption of humane Nature may convince us, that without an extraordinary Assistance from Heaven nothing can prevent the Church under such Circumstances from falling into this State. But our Saviour has declared, that at what Time so-

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ever the Teachers of the Gospel shou'd thus apostatize from their true Dependence, he wou'd at the same Time withdraw that Assistance from them. And to shew that he was as good as his Word, he gave a convincing Proof, when he actually took away from them the Power of working Miracles, as soon as ever they began thus to join other Gods with him in his Service.

WHOEVER reads the History of the Church may perceive, that while her Ministers kept devoutly up to the Plan of Discipline, which was left them by our Saviour and his Apostles, they were able to prove the Truth of their holy Religion by such sensible Works as were above the Power of Nature to perform. And we know, that no temporal Change without a new Revelation, cou'd warrant any Person to make the smallest Alteration in this Plan. But when the State began to change its Persecutions of Christianity into Favours and Encouragements; then the crafty Enemy of Souls perceived he had another Game to play: And a woeful Experience shewed, that he did more Mischief to the Church of God by the gilded Baits of temporal Honours and Emoluments, than ever he was able to effect by open Force. He soon with an accursed Pleasure beheld the Ministers themselves eagerly hunting after and swallowing down the Poison he had laid for them; the Consequence of which was, that the Spirit of God proportionably forsook them: till at length the whole Ecclesiastical



Ecclesiastical Power (*borresco referens*) fell into the Hands of such Persons as sought it purely for the Sake of the earthly Advantages attending it. And what Wonder was it, when the Administration of Ecclesiastical Affairs fell into such Hands; if the mistaken Piety of Princes (in admitting such to a Participation with them of their Authority) shou'd in the End turn to their own Hurt, as the Event proved it did? He who nourishes a Viper in his Bosom will hardly miss of being bit by it. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*; Of all Sorts of Corruption, that of the best Thing is ever found to be the worst: And the more Divine and Holy any Person has formerly been; when he departs from his Innocence, the nearer does he approach to the Nature of a Devil, and consequently will be guilty of the blackest Crimes. Then did *the Glory depart from Israel*; and the Church of Christ was reduced to the State of *Samson*, who, after he had lost those *Locks* in which his *great Strength* was placed, became *weak like any other Man*. Henceforward we hear no more of the Supernatural Effects of that Divine Power, which attended the Profession of the Name of Christ, unless it be in those shameful Legends invented by the Papists to support their pretended Infallibility, and impose upon the credulous Multitude. Christianity was become too corrupt for God Almighty to manifest his Regard for it by so glorious a Testimony. *There is an accursed Thing in the Midst of thee, O Israel; thou canst*

1 Sam. iv.

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Judges xvi.

17.

Josh. vii.

13.

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*not stand before thine Enemies, until ye take away the accursed Thing from among you.*

We know that this Loss of the Power of Miracles to the Church is endeavoured to be represented as no Loss, but quite agreeable to the End of the Christian Dispensation. But the best Arguments offered for this Purpose are so trifling and impertinent, not to say worse, that they only serve to discover the wretched Poverty of the Plea. And when we behold how greedy notwithstanding all Sects of Christians are to lay hold of every Shadow of Miracle to countenance their own Opinions; who can forbear suspecting, that all such Endeavours to cry down the Necessity of Miracles in the present Age, is only like the Fox's reviling the Grapes in the Fable, when he found he cou'd not come at them?

BUT rejecting all such miserable Subterfuges to conceal the Shame of our Christianity, it were much better that the Governours of the Church, to whose Province it belongs, wou'd zealously endeavour after a thorough Reformation of the Christian Ministry to its primitive Standard. Then might we hope that God wou'd once more *lift up the Light of his Countenance upon us, and visit the Vineyard which his own right Hand hath planted with his former loving Kindness.* It must be acknowledged, that a Reformation has been made in these Kingdoms of several gross Abuses received from Rome. But yet in Point

*Pf. iv. 6.*

*Pf. lxxx.*

*15.*

*Pf. lxxxix.*

*49.*

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of Discipline this is done so imperfectly, or rather in some Cases for the worse, that we have given the Papists sufficient Reason for reproaching us with the Nick-name of the *Pretendedly Reformed*. And the Church of *England* herself makes a tacit Acknowledgment of as much in her Preface to the Office of Communion. We are there informed of the godly *Discipline of Penance*, which was used in the *primitive Church in the Beginning of Lent*; the Restoration of which is said to be a Thing *much to be wished*. Now if the Restoration of this Discipline was so desireable to our first Reformers; pray, what was the Reason that they cou'd not bring this about as well as other Things? The Answer I guess will be, that *The State of the Church at that Time cou'd not bear it*. No more it is to be feared will this Topic bear further Examination by any one, without his being thought somewhat too inquisitive. *Hem, Manus abstine; quicquid horum attigeris, Ulcus est*. However, I think one ought to be satisfied in the Case. What Obstacle then was it, which laid in the Way of those first Reformers, to hinder them from so good a Work? Why, when we have traced this a little, we shall find the Blame thrown upon the Constitution, or Union (as it is termed) of the Church with the State; which by the Way is no great Complement to such Union. But as soon as we come to enquire into the Nature of this Union, it will appear that by the Church is here only meant that temporal Authority, which she had usurped



ed in the Times of her Corruption ; and those rich Lands and Livings, which she had received from the Bounty of the State. The former of which has been shewn by no Means to belong to her ; and for the latter she was always intended to be wholly dependent upon the State. But these Morsels, it seems, were too sweet for the Clergy to lose at the Expence of a thorough Reformation. Therefore rather than render back to *Cesar* the Things that are *Cesar's*, the Difference must be compounded ; and if a Convenience can't agree with Christianity, Christianity must be made to agree with a Convenience. We have seen that the Ecclesiastical and Civil Authority are so different in Nature, that they can never be united together without Hurt to both. One great Expedient therefore to bring about a Reformation was, for the Clergy to have resigned all that civil Authority into the Hands of its proper Owner, which their Popish Predecessors had usurped to give Sanction to their spiritual Censures, and have stripped themselves as bare of it, as they were left by our Saviour and his Apostles. And in Consequence of this we shou'd have seen a happy Extirpation of all those iniquitous Courts and Inquisitions, which have turned the Discipline of the Church into the Destruction of Christianity ; and can hardly otherwise merit their assumed Title of *Spiritual*, than as they are subservient to the Designs of the *Spirit of Darknes*s.

THE next necessary Step to a thorough Reformation was, to regulate, according to the primitive Model, the Revenues which the State had allotted for the Maintenance of the Clergy. This wou'd have left a Sufficiency for every one; and at the same Time have effectually removed all Temptations for such Persons to thrust themselves into the Ministry, as have no other End but to satisfy their Idleness, Luxury, Covetousness, Ambition and Pride. Vices, which are become so predominant among the Christian Clergy, as to give sufficient Occasion for that Scoff of Infidels and Atheists; that *Priests of all Religions are the same*. It is indeed melancholy to reflect what infinite Scandal is brought upon the only true Religion upon Earth, by having the *Stewardship of her Mysteries* committed to the Trust of such unworthy Persons: And such it will for the most Part be impossible to keep it from, while the Revenues of the Church are distributed as they are. What a Prospect must this give of Christianity, to see the Teachers of it always scuffling and contending together for Dignities and Preferments, and behaving no better to one another than the wild Beasts of the Forest or Fishes of the Sea; the Stronger ever devouring the Weaker; *all* <sup>1 Cor. iv.</sup> *looking their own Way, every one for his Gain* <sup>11.</sup> *from his Quarter?* Is this agreeable to that Example of equal Dealing, which the Society of the Christian Clergy was required to shew the World; when it is thought fit for one Man to live in the utmost Pomp and Splendor,

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and be put into a Capacity of indulging himself in all Manner of Ease and Voluptuousness; while another, who has an equal Right to a Maintenance, shall be condemned all his Life Time to serve in Quality of Journeyman or Under-strapper to do all the Drudgery of the former; and that often for as small Wages as the other gives his Footman? One wou'd imagine it a Breach of Christian Charity for one Man to think it reasonable that he shou'd enjoy as much as wou'd make two of his needy Brethren with their Families esteem themselves richly provided for, if they had nothing else. But what shall we say for the comprehensive Swallows of those Reverend Gentlemen, who cannot be satisfied with a less Share of the Revenues of the Church than what wou'd be sufficient for ten, fifteen, or even twenty such Families; who are by this Means reduced to a starving Condition? And yet perhaps those very Gentlemen have plentiful Estates of their own besides; so that if Matters were as they ought to be, they are not entitled to one Penny of the Churches Patrimony. One wou'd expect that these Persons shou'd be content at least to relinquish some of their Superfluities to serve the pressing Necessities of their distressed Brethren: But, alas! if we try them, we shall find our selves much mistaken. They are too tenacious ever to let go what they have once got hold of. Nay if any of them do but see a poor Loaf of Bread falling in the Way of a half famish'd Wretch, if it come within his Reach, it will be a great Piece



Piece of Self-denial in him to pass by, without snatching it as greedily out of the Jaws of the other, as if he were ready to perish with Hunger himself. And afterwards it will be a surprizing Instance of Generosity, if he can be prevailed upon to throw the disappointed Starveling a little Bran or a few Scraps of the Parings instead of it.

WE often hear loud Complaints of the exceeding Poverty of the Churches Patrimony, which is usually attributed, and that with no small Aggravation, to the many sacrilegious Robberies committed upon it by the Laity, at the Time of the Reformation. But I can't for my Life forbear thinking that this Ravening made by the Clergy, upon that which their needy Brethren shou'd subsist on, is a Sacrilege of a much blacker Dye. And were the Preferments of the Church as numerous as the Sand upon the Sea Shore, they wou'd always be found insufficient to glut such insatiable Appetites. For every friendless Wretch, and such as cou'd not stoop to the vile Practices, which these Gentlemen make no Bones of, must still continue in the same destitute Condition. We know that the Scripture has pronounced a *Woe* against all *them that join House to House, that lay Field to Field, till there be no Place, that they may be placed alone in the Midst of the Earth.* How many Woes then are laid up for such as scruple not to commit the same Rapine and Devastation in the Heritage of God, setting no Bounds to their Covet-

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oulness and Ambition? Shou'd an *Ignatius* or a *Polycarp* now rise from the Dead, what can we imagine they wou'd say of the present Ecclesiastical OEconomy? How wou'd they bear the Sight? to behold one Part of the Clergy so exactly copying after the Scribes and Pha-

Mat. xxiii.

4.

*risees in binding heavy Burdens grievous to be born, and laying them upon the Shoulders of their Brethren; while they themselves will not move them with one of their Fingers.* What Judgment wou'd they make concerning such of

Job xxx. 1.

*Duty, as even to disdain to set their Fellows with the Dogs of their Flock?* and are so lost to all Bowels and Sense of Compassion for the Afflictions of others, that they can excuse themselves from the least Obligation of Concern about them, out of a pretended Reasonableness, that the utmost they can get is little enough to enable them to live suitably to their Quality, and provide for their Families; or to make a sufficient Return for the Expences of their Education. What cou'd those primitive Pastors think, when they found the principal, if not the only Care, of the Shepherds of Souls employed in securing themselves of the Fleeces and Profits of their Flocks? as if that were the only *Unum necessarium* of their Duty, and St. Paul's Example were now no otherwise to be imitated than by

2 Cor. xii.

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*the Inversion of it, in seeking theirs, but not them.* In Fine, with what a Mixture of Shame and Detestation and Sorrow may we reasonably suppose wou'd these Holy Persons be

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filled at all these Abominations? when they shou'd hear their Saviour thus bemoaning the fallen State of his Church. *Mine Heritage is* Jer. xii. *unto me as a speckled Bird, the Birds round* 8--10. *about are against her. Many Pastors have destroyed my Vineyard, they have troden my Portion under Foot; they have made my pleasant Portion a desolate Wilderness. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole Land is made desolate, because no Man layeth it to Heart.*

BUT what is more melancholy than all the rest, in a manner the whole Body (of the richer Clergy especially) seem to be quite insensible of any Guilt they incur in the foregoing Respects. At least they will not own it, and so set themselves at the farthest Remove from any Hopes of Amendment. As if they were ambitious to copy after the Pharisees in all Respects, they are apt to deride Luke xvi. 14, 15. all Remonstrances which can be made to them of this Kind, and *justify themselves before Men.* Wou'd you attempt to shew them what a wrong Thing it is for a Christian Bishop to prefer one of his Presbyters before another, or do any Thing by Partiality, upon 1 Tim. v. 21. Account of any temporal Obligation, which he can lay under; It is odds, but you will be spurned at for your Insolence and Impudence; or if you be vouchsafed an Answer, it will scarce be of more Force than this, which yet must be looked upon as sufficient, *That in the present State of the Church Things can*



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*can be no otherwise; and if any Alterations should be attempted, it would be in Danger of making the Matter much worse. Would you go about to persuade a rich superannuated Ecclesiastic to relinquish his Living and make Way for those that want it; as having an abundant Sufficiency without it: How large soever that Sufficiency may be, he will either take all your Discourse as only meant by way of Banter; or if he perceive you in Earnest, he has got Scripture to stop your Mouth; where it is said, That if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel. And by the Strength of this Quotation he will satisfy his Conscience in screwing down some poor Curate so low in his Salary, that if the latter be so unfortunate as to have a Family, he may screw up his Mouth for any great Occasion he has for it; unless it be to do the Work of his bountiful Master. Again when we plead, how contrary it is, to that Brotherly Love, Contempt of earthly Things, and Recumbence upon God (which ought to be the distinguishing Character of a Christian Priest) that one Man should not be content with the Portion of two, but be continually reaching after more; we usually hear no better Defence for the Lawfulness of it, than an impious referring of us to the Practice of all Mankind. And they seem to think they have given a sufficient Answer, when they ask us in our Turn, *What Man does otherwise?* A hopeful Answer indeed*

1 Tim. v.  
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deed from one who has presumed to take up  
 on him the tremendous Office of an *Ambassa- 2 Cor. v.*  
*dor for Christ*, and such as will be of equal <sup>20.</sup>  
 Force to absolve him from the most flagitious  
 Crimes, if he have but Multitudes enow to  
 keep him in Countenance. It must be ac- *Ex. xxiii.*  
 knowledged, if that can give them any Satisf- <sup>2.</sup>  
 faction, that (by so long a Run of such accur-  
 sed Examples, from those who ought to be  
 Patterns of all Good) it is at length come to  
 pass, *There are few who do otherwise!* But,  
 good God! is this an Argument sufficient to  
 acquit Men from their Obligations of Charity  
 to one another, and make them throw away  
 all Humanity and Compassion? O, Christiani-  
 ty, whither art thou fled? In what Corner of  
 the Earth shall we seek thee? when the very  
 Heathens shew much stronger Instances of a  
 sincere Devotion to their false Gods, than the  
 Teachers of the Gospel themselves can for the  
 most Part be prevail'd upon to shew to the  
 True. What is now become of that ardent  
 Zeal for the Glory of God and Good of  
 Souls, that strict Temperance and Purity of  
 Manners, that Holiness of Conversation, that  
 amiable Meekness and Humility, and finally  
 that unwearied Diligence in all the Duties of  
 Religion, which the primitive Clergy were so  
 remarkable for? These Things were perhaps  
 never more talked of than in our own Con-  
 gregations. But, alas! they seem now a-days,  
 as if they were only designed to be talked of  
 there, without ever being put in Practice any  
 where: for, generally speaking, if we take the  
 Teach-

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Teacher himself out of his Pulpit or reading Desk, we shall find him in his whole Behaviour and Conversation to act as if they were no longer in his Thoughts. Thus *both the*  
*2 Cor. iv.* *God of this World blinded the Minds* of them  
 4. that shou'd be Guides to others. When Men  
*John xii.* wilfully shut their Eyes, and receive not the  
 40. Truth in the Love of it, the next Step is for  
*2 Thes. ii.* God to take away the very Power of Seeing  
 10, 11. from them, and send them strong Delusion, that they shou'd believe a Lie: So that in the End they come to commit Sin greedily, without Shame or Remorse, and are Proof against all the Means which can be used for their Reformation. Their Conscience is seared as with a  
*1 Tim. iv.* hot Iron; the Word of the Lord is unto them a  
 2. *Jer. vi. 10.* Reproach, they have no Delight in it.

NOR, while Things continue in this Situation, are we to expect much more Credit to Christianity from the Examples of those unfortunate Clergy-Men, who are thus oppressed and trampled under Foot by their Brethren. We know that Poverty and hard Circumstances have no less Tendency to abate Mens Virtues, than a State of Affluence and Plenty.

*Juven.* *Haud facile emergunt, quorum Virtutibus obstat*  
*Sat. iii.* *Res angusta Domi—*

This oftentimes compels a generous Mind to act Things beneath himself; for which he ought rather to be pitied than reproached. The Crying Wants of a Family; the Importunities

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tunities of Creditors; the contemptuous Usage he daily meets with; and above all the bitter Moans and Complaints of an inconsolable Wife, which are perpetually sounding in his Ears; these certainly are no small Trials for a poor Man to struggle with, and it is no Wonder if they sometimes beat him from his Guard. But if at any Time he chance to kick under the Load that oppresses him, or shew the least Resentment against the true Cause of all his Misery; this is an unpardonable Crime indeed; and the least Punishment, it is thought worthy of, is the adding more Weight to his Burden. Thus after his charitable Brethren have pushed the poor Wretch into a Ditch, they endeavour to beat out his Brains for having Spots upon his Cloaths; and afterwards can *wipe their Mouths, and say,* PROV. XXII. 20. *They have done no Wickedness.*

UPON the Whole, Matters are brought to that Pass, that we can scarce find a Society of Men upon the Face of the Earth, which betrays more wretched Partiality and unequal Dealing towards one another, or more haughty and disdainful Behaviour of Superiors towards Inferiors, than what is at present visible among Churchmen. So that the Complaint, which God once made against the Jewish Church, may be too appositely now applied to the Christian; *There is a Conspiracy of her Prophets in the Midst thereof, like a roaring Lion* EZEK. XXII. 25, 26. *ravening the Prey: they have devoured Souls: they have taken the Treasure and precious Things;*

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Ezek.  
xxxiv. 2-  
5.

Mala. ii.  
8, 9.

Mat. v.  
13.

Things: they have made her many Widows in the Midst thereof. Her Priests have violated my Law, and have profaned my holy Things: they have put no Difference between the Holy and Profane, neither have they showed Difference between the Unclean and the Clean; and have hid their Eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Woe be to the Shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves: should not the Shepherds feed the Flock? ye eat the Fat, and ye cloath you with the Wooll; ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the Flock. The Diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye fought that which was lost: but with Force and with Cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered because there was no Shepherd: and they became Meat to all the Beasts of the Field, when they were scattered. No Wonder then that a Society so depraved from their original Institution should bring such Contempt upon their sacred Function. This is what they have none to blame for, but themselves. Ye are departed out of the Way: ye have caused many to stumble at the Law: ye have corrupted the Covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the People, according as ye have not kept my Ways, but have been partial in the Law. Our Saviour himself tells us that If the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thence-

thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under Foot of Men. But this is not all, for this Contempt cannot rest only upon themselves; but must necessarily reflect the utmost Dishonour upon our holy Religion, and give Occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. <sup>2 Sam. xii. 14.</sup>

And doubtless this Defection of the Ministers of the Gospel is the principal Cause of the exceeding Growth of Infidelity among us at present. What can be expected when we have scarce the least Shadow left of that ardent Devotion, and heavenly Conversation, which was so peculiar to Christianity; but what is to be found among a few brain-sick pretended Enthusiasts? It cannot indeed be denied, but that several of the Clergy of our own Times have by their Writings worthily defended Christianity against all the wicked Efforts of Infidels. But, alas? this of itself can be of small Availment against the spreading Contagion of so dangerous a Malady. The Generality of Mankind have not such metaphysical Heads, as to be able to discern the Force of the Arguments, which are made Use of upon such Occasions. And till something else be done, it can hardly be expected, but that Infidelity and Irreligion will always gain Ground. As long as the holy Scriptures are open to the Reading of all Men, the manifest Contradiction between the primitive and the present Discipline of the Church will be a continual Reproach to us. And this, no



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Doubt, was the Reason why the more politick, but therefore the more wicked Clergy of *Rome*, were so industrious to conceal those sacred Writings from their People.

It is usually urged by the Clergy themselves, that the general Contradiction between the Lives and Professions of private Christians is the greatest Stumbling Block, which lies in the Way to prevent Infidels from embracing Christianity. Whence it follows, that the same Contradiction between the Behaviour and Obligations of the Teachers of Christianity must be an equal Cause of driving Christians themselves into Infidelity. The Reasons are the same for continuing in Infidelity in the former Case, and for taking Refuge in it in the latter. Both are drawn from the apparent Lie, which their Practices give to their Professions. From whence Men are naturally apt to conclude, that whatever such Persons pretend, they themselves believe not a Word of what they say: And the most solemn Offices of our Religion are looked upon as no better than mere Grimace and Disguise. Only herein lies a Difference, that the Clergy by their ill Examples do as it were engross the whole Guilt to themselves; for from thence all the Contagion takes its Rise, and there it centers.

THUS we see how evidently the greatest Scandals and Disorders, which have ever entered the Christian Church, do derive their  
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Original from the Defection of the Clergy from that Plan, which our Saviour and his Apostles had chalked out for them; exchanging it for their own Inventions. This it is for the Clergy to usurp the secular Authority, and regulate the Degrees of spiritual Superiors and Inferiors, according to great Incomes and Preferments: which is just the same, as to resign so much of the Government of the Church into the Hands of the Devil, who will not fail to make his Advantage of it. Money and earthly Dependencies, when made Use of this Way, have always a like Tendency to the Mischief of this spiritual Body, which the rankest Poison has to the Body natural. Yet the Heads of most Clergymen have received such an unhappy Turn from these Things, that they seem as if they cou'd not so much as imagine any solid Foundation to fix the Welfare and Dignity of the Church upon, without them.

Thus in what Degree soever Men cast off their Dependence upon God, in the same Degree they are disabled from putting any true Confidence in him. They dare not, they cannot have the Heart to do it. It is true, we are required to use all lawful and honest Means in our Power to help ourselves; and to neglect doing so, in Expectation that God shou'd do every Thing for us by Miracle, is not a true Trust and Confidence, but a presumptuous tempting of him. But certainly those Means can never be lawful, which God has

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has expressly forbid. We are to take Notice then, that God has commanded his Ministers, as such, to rely upon no other Support in the Discharge of their Office, but upon himself only; and that they should not afford the least Umbrage to make it seem, as if his Church stood in Need of humane Power or Art to uphold it. Hence they were strictly forbid to be anxious about what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed; but were to employ their principal Care and Study in propagating the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all those Things should be added unto them. And when at any Time they were brought before Magistrates and Powers, they were not to afflict themselves about what they should answer, or what they should say. For it was promised them that the Holy Ghost should teach them in the same Hour, what they ought to say. Wherefore they were to settle it in their Hearts, not to meditate before, what they should answer: for he would give them a Mouth and Wisdom, which all their Adversaries should not be able to gainsay, nor resist. Nay they were assured that if they had Faith as a Grain of Mustardseed, they should say unto this Mountain, Remove hence to yonder Place, and it should remove; and nothing should be impossible unto them. They should have Power to tread on Serpents and Scorpions, and over all the Power of the Enemy; and nothing should by any Means hurt them. And were the Church of God at this Time actuated by the same Faith, and govern-

Mat. vi.  
31-33.

Luke xii.  
11, 12.

Luke xxi.  
14, 15.

Mat. xvii.  
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Luke x. 19.

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governed by the same Principles, there is no Doubt but the world would be enabled to do and suffer the same Things. For he, who is the same Yesterday, and to Day, and for ever, has given his Word that upon these Conditions his Presence shall never be wanting to his Ministers to the End of the Worlds.

Heb. xiii.  
8.

Mat.  
xxviii.20.

I presume no more needs be said to prove that the foregoing was the Model, which the Holy Ghost prescribed for the Discipline of the Christian Clergy, as long as there should be a Church upon Earth. For it has been shewn to be founded in the very Nature and End of their Institution; and has not the least Dependence upon any Change they could possibly undergo on a temporal Account. From whence it must follow, that no temporal Change could be a sufficient Warrant for introducing any Change in it. It was an Attempt to amend the Works of God, and was sure to have the same Success, which all such Attempts must necessarily have. And such Alterations of this Kind, as have been made, are much more criminal in many Cases, than to entertain wrong Notions in a pure Article of Faith. For the latter sometimes happen'd out of pure Mistake, and was consistent with an honest Mind; but the former can never admit of the like Excuse. At what Time soever therefore the Successors of the Apostles began to loose the Bands of the Gospel Discipline, as too strait for their secular and corrupt Designs, and to wrest

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wrest the Rules, which their Predecessor had left for their Direction, to the Gratification of their Luxury, Covetousness, Ambition and Pride: at that Time they might be truly said to apostatize from their Christianity, and as really become Hereticks to the Faith, as any of those whom they have the most virulently stigmatized with that odious Name. And I heartily wish this were seriously considered by all those fiery hot headed Zealots, who are so bitter against every one that differs from them in Opinion; which perhaps wou'd caution them to endeavour to *cast the Beams out of their own Eyes* before they attempt to *pull the Mote out of their Brother's Eyes.*

Luke vi.  
42.

*F I N I S.*

E R R A T A.

Page 4. Line the last, read *these Things shall, &c.*

Whatever other Error the Reader may meet with, he is desired to correct with his Pen.